

had appeared by now; and the world of 1850, watching the birth in swift succession of works like *David Copperfield*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *In Memoriam*, had no eyes for this odd relic of the unknown dead. Only a few observers saw that something new had been added to English poetry; but among them were Tennyson and Browning. Years passed; Kelsall, devoted as ever, heard of Browning's admiration, met him (1867), begged him to write a preface for a new edition, sent him some of the manuscripts, offered to bequeath him all. Browning accepted; he contemplated, at a time when he seemed likely to be made Professor of Poetry at Oxford, giving his opening lecture on Beddoes. But nothing came of it, neither preface nor lecture; Browning had grown bored. And Kelsall, too, was growing old. In 1869 he made, with Zoe King, a pilgrimage to the scenes at Basel and Zurich where Beddoes' life had guttered out twenty years before; in July, 1872, he contributed an article on the dead poet to the *Fortnightly*; three months after this last stroke for Beddoes', as he called it, he too was dead.

The manuscripts duly passed to Browning, with a message from Mrs. Kelsall revealing to him what had been hitherto kept dark—that Beddoes had died by his own hand. This grim addition made the poet of optimism more disposed than ever to play ostrich and

forget the
whole affair. The box of yellowing papers
acquired in his
eyes a sinister horror. Another decade went
by; then he
talked of it to his young neighbour, Edmund
Gosse; and
finally, one day in 1883, led him to the
locked box,
pressed the key into his hand, and fled.
However, once
Bluebeard's Cupboard was open, Browning's
repugnance
weakened sufficiently for him to read over
the manu-
scripts with Gosse; who in consequence
produced a new
edition of the *Works* in 1890, followed by a
volume of